

# Dog finds a home in the hearts of Livonia couple

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Cody, a docile and affectionate dog with a hard-luck life and a long list of health problems, has managed to end up in the cozy Livonia home of Bob and Mary Anne Heinrich.

He was found -- all skin and bones -- by a boy on a dirt road near Jackson about a year ago. He was then taken in by an animal rescue group that watched for months as visitors at the shelter and adoption events looked past him in search of more enthusiastic dogs.

The Heinrichs were Cody's one chance at finding a home, and they were a long shot at that.

Bob Heinrich, 62, is allergic to dogs, and both he and his wife, Mary Anne, 60, were planning on a nothing-to-tie-them-down retirement.

That was before they met Cody, a redtick coonhound nobody wanted, not with all of his costly and time-consuming health problems.

The Heinrichs' daughter, Amy, a volunteer with Last Chance Animal Rescue in Howell, begged her parents to take Cody in temporarily in October 2006.

"I told my husband, we'll just foster him. He said, 'No more than two months,' " Mary Anne recalled. "My heart just broke every time we would drive to Howell for the adoption days, and no one would take him. My husband knew I was getting attached."

The attachment was sealed in December. On Christmas morning, Mary Anne came downstairs to find Cody with a big red bow tied around him and an envelope containing adoption papers, a present from Bob.

"My husband also said, 'He's not sleeping in the bedroom.' Well, Cody sleeps in the bedroom every night. He doesn't like to be separated from us," Mary Anne said. "My husband is really a big softie."

The cost of this living gift would exceed luxury watches, diamond necklaces and furniture.

"I looked at it as this being her fur coat," said Bob, who takes an allergy pill these days and is amazed by how much he has fallen in love with his first dog.

The Heinrichs have easily spent more than \$6,000 in medical bills, including Cody's last surgery, which cost almost \$4,000. His other surgeries were paid for by Last Chance Rescue except for \$250 donated by the Heinrichs.

Cody, only 2 years old, has needed three surgeries because of debilitating hip dysplasia.

"He's had a lot of adversity in his life," Mary Anne said. "He's been through a lot, but he's been such a great dog. He's like a member of the family. He's ours to love and take care of."

He had two surgeries on one hip in 2006. A third on the other hip was performed Feb. 7 at Michigan Veterinary Specialists, which has clinics and hospitals in Auburn Hills and Southfield.

Doctors had planned to do a procedure that would make Cody what they called a bionic dog, giving him an artificial hip joint. But during surgery, Dr. Kyle Kerstetter discovered the hip bone was too far gone, so he had to do a less ambitious procedure. But the surgery is still expected to help Cody.

As of now, Cody is recovering and given therapy by the Heinrichs three times a day. They have to make sure he exercises and help him stretch.

"He walks. He favors one leg, but he jumps on the couch. He climbs the stairs. Later in the evening he's tired and his leg hurts, but he's getting better," Mary Anne said. "He's about 80% normal. Yes, he's absolutely a lucky dog, but we're lucky too."

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*(MARY SCHROEDER/Detroit Free Press)*

Mary Anne and Bob Heinrich embrace their dog Cody in their Livonia home on Monday. Cody was a special needs dog nobody wanted until the couple agreed to take him in on a temporary basis. He never left.

#### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

#### **How to get involved**

To learn more about Last Chance Animal Rescue, the no-kill group that saved Cody, go to [www.lastchancerescue.org](http://www.lastchancerescue.org) or call 810-220-9394.